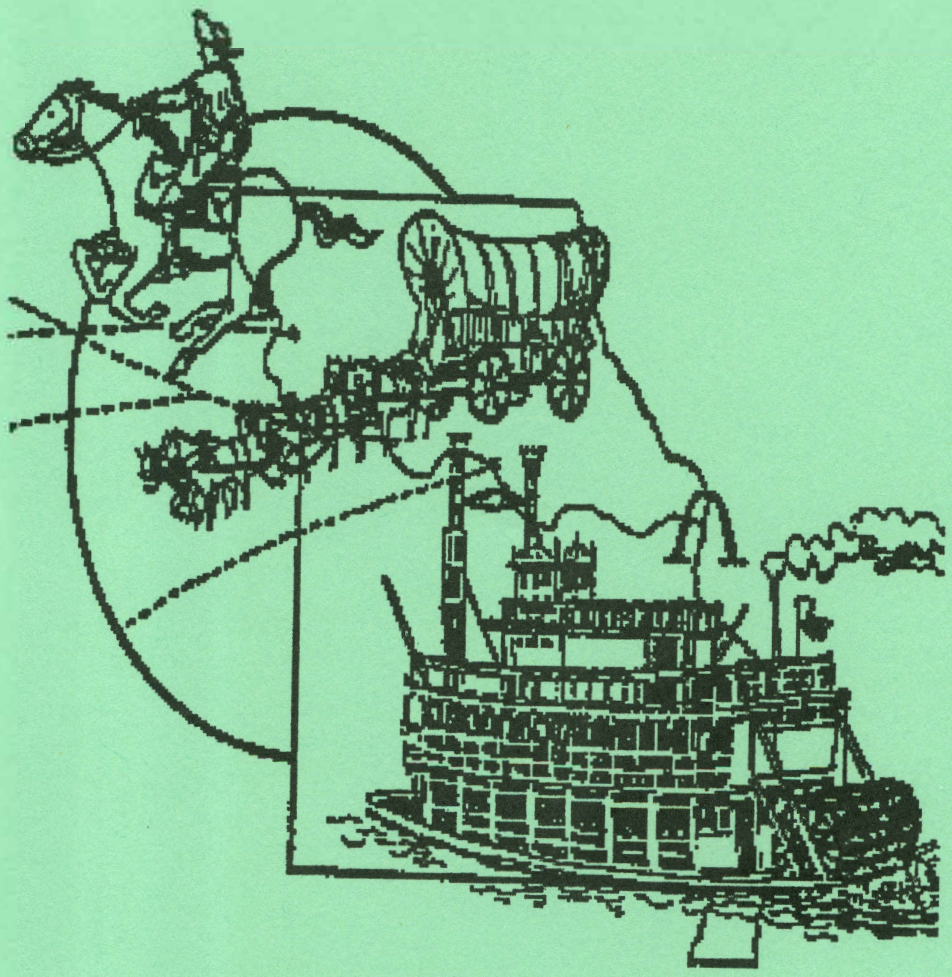

Toward The Setting Sun

2nd Series, Vol. 3, No. 2 Spring, 2005

TOWARD THE SETTING SUN

The Historical Journal of the Missouri Conference

The United Methodist Church

Second Series

Volume 3, No. 2 *Spring, 2005*

INTRODUCTION

This year marks the bicentennial of the official beginnings of Missouri Methodism. (There is still controversy over the ministry of John Clark.) In 1805 (when conference met in the fall) Bishop Asbury appointed Joseph Oglesby to the Illinois Circuit, and "suggested" that he also check on Methodist prospects in Upper Lousiana. It was only slightly more than a year since the young United States had taken possession of Upper Louisiana at St. Louis, and sent Meriwether Lewis, William Clark, and their Corps of Discovery up the Missouri. At the time of Oglesby's appointment, the Corps was still fighting its way through the Bitterroot Mountains in today's Idaho, or else paddling madly down the Columbia River, hoping to see the ocean at last. Our next issue will have more on Oglesby.

In this issue, you'll find some interesting work. The essay of Enoch Marvin, the first Misssourian, was first given as an historical address to the Missouri East Conference. Dr. Albea Godbold was, among other appointments, pastor of St. John's UMC in St. Louis, Superintendent of the St. Louis North District, and Executive Secretary of the Methodist Archives and History Commission, first in North Carolina, and then at Drew University in New Jersey. Dick Detweiler reminds us of the importance of youth ministry in the church. Dick was, among other appointments, Superintendent of the Hannibal-Kirksville District and Council Director in the Missouri East Conference. My own essay on singing the faith was first given as the historical address at Old McKendree Chapel, Old McKendree Day, 2000.

So, enjoy this issue and continue to send ideas and articles to me to jogooch@aol.com. I'll look forward to hearing from you.

John O. Gooch
Editor

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ENOCH MATHER MARVIN – DEDICATED GENIUS

Albea Godbold[1]

A century ago, Enoch Mather Marvin was the brightest star in the firmament of Methodism in the west. He was admitted into the Missouri Conference at 18. Rising rapidly, he was the premier preacher among his brethren before he was 30. He went to General Conference when only 30, and was elected to each succeeding General Conference while he remained in Missouri. He was elected bishop at 42; and in the next eleven and one-half years he wrote five books and preached more sermons than the average preacher delivers in a lifetime. As a bishop, he preached the gospel with power from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from Missouri to the Gulf, to the white man, the black man, and the red man and finally to all the continents. At the same time he made an amazing record as a leader in the larger church. He died at 54 while still in his prime and while his brilliant career was at its zenith. His sudden death was noted in the newspapers throughout the continent and in London and Shanghai. His untimely passing was lamented perhaps more keenly then the demise of any other Methodist leader of his generation; and 86 years afterward his memory is still green in the church he loved and served with such diligence and devotion.

What manner of man was E.M. Marvin? What was the secret of his scintillating career in the church? Marvin was born on a farm about two miles southwest of Wright City, Missouri, on June 12, 1823, the third of four children in the family. His ancestors came to Connecticut in 1635, and for generations his forebears lived in New England. His father and mother were married in New York State in 1817, and immediately moved to Missouri and homesteaded the farm on which their children were born.

Marvin had an undistinguished childhood and youth. He felt close to and admired his mother; he respected his father but did not have similar affection and esteem for him. His father belonged to no church. His mother was a Regular Baptist in the east but did not affiliate with any church in Missouri. Neither parent like the Methodists, and they seldom if ever entertained Methodist circuit riders during Marvin's youth. In view of the home situation, it is surprising that Marvin became a Methodist and that he developed into one

[1] This article was an historical address given to the Missouri East Annual Conference in 1963. It appeared in the Conference Journal for that year.

of the most distinguished and dedicated churchmen our denomination has produced since the days of Francis Asbury.

Marvin had very little formal schooling. As a child his mother taught him in summer and his father in winter. At one time his mother maintained a school for children of the neighborhood in her home. When Marvin was 17 he himself taught school a few months. Years later when Marvin was donning robes to be ordained a bishop, someone asked him, "Where did you graduate?" He replied, "Nowhere."

During Marvin's boyhood, the home of a neighbor William McConnell, served as a Methodist preaching place. McConnell took an interest in the boy. Marvin became a seeker of religion while in his teens and persisted for 31 months before he was satisfied with his experience. There was no sudden, catastrophic conversion. Marvin joined the church in December, 1840, and ever afterward he was a deeply spiritual man and was often emotional about his personal religion. Soon after becoming a church member Marvin was made an exhorter. Then the Ebenezer Church near Marthasville recommended him for a license to preach. He delivered a trial sermon on Sunday night and was licensed to preach the next day.

Marvin was admitted on trial into the Missouri Conference at Palmyra in September, 1841. He was not present at the conference. It was probably better for him and for the church that he did not appear in person. The long-limbed, loose-jointed, unprepossessing youth, dressed in ill-fitting clothes, might not have impressed the committee on admissions as a promising candidate for the ministry.

All contemporary records say that young Marvin was homely looking and that he made a negative first impression. In his early years he was nearly always dressed in homemade, badly worn or ill-fitting, clothes. His height was six feet, one inch. He was thin and his features were sharp. His hands and feet were long and slender. His fait was irregular. Withal he was ugly and ungainly.

Marvin's first appointment was the Grundy Mission, a newly organized circuit near the center of the state. Before leaving home for his appointment he bought a horse, saddle, bridle, and saddlebags for $150, all on credit. The debt was to plague him for years. His total pay in money that first year was $15. But though the salary was small, the harvest in souls was large, 131 new members.

When Marvin arrived at conference in Jefferson City after a year of circuit riding his strikingly peculiar appearance, his plain clothes, and his long hair attracted unfavorable attention. Some thought the conference would discontinue so unpromising a

candidate for the itinerancy. In the room where the class of the first year was to be examined, he sat apart from the other men. But to the surprise of those present he answered forthrightly and correctly the questions put to him and was advanced to the class of the second year.

When the conference adjourned, Marvin crossed the Missouri River on horseback and started toward Wright City to visit his parents, whom he had not seen for a year. Three other preachers, already established in the conference, were riding in the same direction. Seeing Marvin ahead of them they quickened their pace, overtook him, and proceeded to give him some advice.
They told him he ought to dropout of the conference because he was obviously not suited to the ministry. Marvin's only reply was, "Do you think so?" Assuring him that in giving such counsel they had only his best interest in mind, they rode on. The three men were Jacob Lanius, George Smith, and Samuel G. Patterson.

The sequel to that incident in 1842 is one of the most astounding stories in the annals of American Methodism. Just ten years later when the conference met at St. Joseph, Marvin by formal request of the conference preached the funeral sermon of Jacob Lanius, an indication that within the decade Marvin had risen to prominence and leadership in the conference.

Some eleven years afterward, Patterson happened to be in Danville and went to the church for the funeral service of one Dr. Bond, a prominent man. Patterson was told in advance that the service would be conducted by the presiding elder, whose name was not mentioned. Writing about it later, Patterson said that no sooner had the preacher launched into his sermon than he gripped the attention of all. His though was elevated, his speech chaste, and his illustrations superb. Patterson knew he was listening to a great preacher. When the service was over the preacher made his way down the aisle to Patterson, put out his hand, and said, "I am Marvin." Patterson was embarrassed, and his discomfiture was not alleviated when Marvin kindly invited him to share his room with him for the night.

But more phenomenal yet was the turn of events for the third man who advised Marvin to drops out of the conference. Twenty-five years afterward Marvin returned to Missouri as the presiding bishop and made Smith's appointment as a member of the conference. Has anything like it ever happened before or since in American Methodism?

Marvin's appointment in 1842, his second year in the conference, was the Oregon Circuit, another untried mission field. According to the conference journal, his

ministry was again successful – he won 157 members. But again the workman received only a pittance for his hire -- $30 for the entire year.

Marvin was admitted into full connection in 1843, ordained deacon by Bishop J.O. Andrew, and appointed to Liberty. Liberty was a circuit but it was an established work. His pay for the year was $33.23 ¾.

In his first three years in the conference Marvin was paid a total of $78.23 ¾! Thomas M. Finney, Marvin's, biographer, doubts that any other preacher in American up to that time ever received so little in pay in 36 consecutive months. How did the circuit rider live on such miserably low remuneration? The answer is that the people fed him and his horse, and the godly women sewed for him and gave him clothes.

In 1844 the conference met at Fourth Street Church, St. Louis, later called First Church. Marvin was 21. By this time some of the brethren declared that he was a preacher of promise. Among them was W.W. Redman, Marvin's presiding elder his first three years in the conference. When Marvin's name was called for the passage of his character, Redman said, "Bishop, he is a green-looking boy, but I tell you he can preach; and if he lives he will be a star!" At the same conference another man saw Marvin for the first time, an angular youth with long tangled hair standing up and eagerly listening to a speaker who had the floor. The man turned to William G. Caples and asked, "Who in the world is that?" Caples replied, "Enoch, the seventh from Adam!" Marvin was asked to preach at the conference that year. It was a trial sermon. When the appointments were read out, he was assigned as junior preacher at Fourth Street, St. Louis.

Marvin roomed at the home of Joseph Boyle, the presiding elder, while serving as junior preacher at Fourth Street Church. Since Boyle had a good library, it may be assumed that Marvin made good use of it. It is believed that Marvin learned Latin and Greek that years, and as time passed he became more "book learned" than some thought. Before his election to the episcopacy he diligently studied books. Mrs. Marvin said he studied at home, when traveling and when in the cabins of the people.

In 1845 the conference met at Columbia, and there Bishop Joshua Soule ordained Marvin elder. This was a fateful year for Missouri Methodism and for Marvin. Under the plan of separation adopted by the General Conference off 1844, annual conferences and the preachers in border territory had the right to vote whether they would adhere north or south as the denomination divided. Almost all members of the Missouri Conference, including Marvin, became Southern Methodists. At the same conference session, Missouri Methodism was divided into two annual conferences, all the territory north of

the Missouri River being designated as the Missouri Conference, and all south of the River as the St. Louis Conference. Marvin remained in the Missouri Conference and was appointed to Weston Circuit with George D. Tolls as his junior preacher. There were losses on the circuit that year as some members went to the M.E. Church, but even so Marvin's report showed a net gain of 58 members for the year.

The great issue of human slavery seems not to have disturbed Marvin's conscience in the 1840s or later. Since his parents came from New England and did not own slaves, it would not have been strange if he had opposed slavery and had gone with the M.E. Church in 1845. But throughout his life Marvin's sympathies were with the South. He noted that slavery was recognized in the Bible and that the Bible did not condemn it. This seems to have settled the question for Marvin. He believed that slavery was an issue that concerned the state and not the church. In his opinion, it was the duty of the church to serve God and man as best it could in society as it finds it. Like most devout men, Marvin had his moral blind spots, and this was one of them. Later one, he actually owned a slave. But it may be said to his credit that he purchased the Negro woman out of kindness so that in the settlement of an estate she would not be sold and separated from her husband.

As conference approached in 1845, Marvin decided that he ought to get married. This eventful step in his life was the result of cool deliberation. He was not in love; he had not even been courting the young woman he proposed to marry. He says he decided that Harriet Brotherton Clark of Bridgeton, Missouri, would make a good preacher's wife; he then hired a horse and buggy in St. Louis and drove out to see her. When he got there he found her, he said, a thousand times more attractive and lovely than he had imagined, and he proposed to her, was accepted, married her forthwith, and took her to the annual conference as a bride of one week! She was three years his senior. Throughout the remainder of his life he had for her the deepest affection, and he used extravagant language in praise of her as a helpmeet, as a mother, and as the manager of his household.

In 1846 when Marvin was 23, Bishop Robert Paine appointed him to Hannibal, one of the strongest stations in the conference. Conference leaders recommended Marvin for the place because he was a devoted, studious, successful preacher who could handle the problems in that church where some members wanted to adhere north and others south. He did so well that he was reappointed for a second year.

In 1848 the conference met at Weston. In the absence of Bishop Capers who did not arrive until near the end of the session, Andrew Monroe presided, Monroe sent

Marvin from Hannibal station to the Monticello Circuit. All accounts say that Monroe did not feel that he was degrading Marvin to send him to a circuit, nor did Marvin feel that he was degraded in going. One may doubt the accuracy of such assertions. Monroe was a mature man who had long been a leader in the conference. He may have felt the young preacher of 25 needed more seasoning and that a circuit was the place for him to get it. Marvin went to the circuit cheerfully and without complaint and had a great year. But that in itself does not prove that he did not feel demoted. Mrs. Marvin said that her husband was quite pleased with the station at Hannibal and that they had a pleasant home while there. It is only fair to note, however, that in later years Marvin often said that if given his choice of appointments, he would always take a three weeks' circuit.

After two years on the Monticello Circuit, where he had great revivals, Marvin was sent to Palmyra, another prominent station. At the end of one year in Palmyra, he was appointed to the St. Charles Circuit! He served one year on that circuit, and then was made presiding elder of the St. Charles District, the strongest district in the conference! Thus he did make dramatic moves up and down the scale from stations to circuits and from circuits to stations. But his appointment to the St. Charles Circuit may have been because he asked for a place near his father's home that year; he needed to be near because of much illness and bereavement in his father's family.

Marvin served two years on the St. Charles District. Bishop Paine chose him for the post because he regarded him as a man of personal force and administrative ability. He did have capacity for administration, but he was more noted for his preaching power. He was only 29, but in the pulpit he was superior to any of his preachers. He started revivals, staying days and sometimes several weeks on a charge after a quarterly meeting. The strongest men in the conference had served the St. Charles District for 25 years, but even so, the youthful presiding elder enlarged it by two pastoral charges, and there was a net gain of 758 members.

In his second year on the district, Marvin served also as agent for St. Charles College. The third year he gave up the district and devoted full time too the college agency work. Thus began on his part a keen interest in the educational work of the church which never waned. Through his efforts, the college attained financial stability for the time being. A few years later, he declined the presidency of St. Charles College, preferring to remain in the pastorate. However, he continued to serve as college agent along with his pastoral work until he went south in 1862.

In June, 1855, while Marvin was still full-time college agent, the Centenary Church pulpit in St. Louis became vacant because the pastor, James Sewell, went back east. Marvin supplied the church until conference. That fall he was transferred to the St. Louis Conference and appointed to Centenary. Thus at 32 the man who said he preferred a three weeks circuit above any other appointment, went to a city pastorate, and he was never again to serve as pastor in Missouri outside the City of St. Louis. His ministry at Centenary, then at Fifth and Pine Streets, was very acceptable. Finney says an empty house commenced to fill. A drooping membership began to revive. The official board was in better spirits, saying they would not send east for transfers if they could get Marvin of Missouri. People from the hotels came to church, and soon Marvin's preaching became known over the state.

After two years at Centenary, Marvin moved to First Church, at Eighth and Washington. He was if anything more successful there than at Centenary. There was a great revival with 84 conversions. He never had a sweeping revival at Centenary.

In 1859 Marvin moved back to Centenary as pastor and was reappointed in 1860. As it turned out, this was the last appointment Marvin ever received at the hands of a bishop. The conference tried to meet in 1861 at Arrow Rock, but because of the war only the preachers nearby attended. Nothing was done about the appointments in the districts not represented at the conference, so Marvin just stayed on at Centenary. By that time Marvin had become widely known as a pulpiteer, and some said that he was the greatest preacher St. Louis Methodism had known.

Marvin was a skillful debater. He admitted that in his youth he liked controversy. There are several accounts of how as a young pastor he came off best in public debates on water baptism and creeds with Baptist and Campbellite preachers. In 1859, during his second pastorate at Centenary, he had a real challenge to demonstrate his prowess as a debater. A Catholic priest named Smarius delivered a course of addresses at St. Xavier's Church connected with St. Louis University. Smarius attacked the Protestant faith, and his addresses were printed in the newspaper, thus attracting much attention. Friends felt that Marvin was the man to make reply. With some hesitancy he launched a series of lectures on Roman Catholicism, delivering them extempore on Sunday nights and later writing them out for the newspaper. He disclaimed originality, except in arrangement and illustration, noting that all he was saying could be found in books. He made much of the fact that all he said about the Roman Catholic Church was taken from Catholic sources.

The 23 lectures drew large crowds at the church, and the printed book had a wide sale. Much of what he published is still pertinent.

Marvin attended the General Conference of 1850 in St. Louis as a visitor and was keenly interested in the church leaders and their deliberations. He declared that from his youth he had what he called a romantic interest in men of ability and achievement. In 1854 he was elected a delegate to the General Conference from the Missouri Conference. The St. Louis Conference sent him as a delegate in 1858. At that gathering he worked to no avail for the election to the episcopacy of his friend and fellow Missourian, William G. Caples. He was elected to the 1862 General Conference that did not meet because of the war. Since he was out of the state, his conference did not elect him to the General Conference of 1866, the one that elevated him to the episcopacy.

When the Civil War began, the work of the M.E.Church, South, in Missouri was largely disrupted. Marvin continued to preach for some months at Centenary Church, but it became increasingly clear that a crisis for him was impending. The military authorities were demanding an oath of allegiance to the United States which he was unwilling to take. Therefore, he laid plans to leave St. Louis secretly and go south. He took his family to the old place at Wright City, laying in supplies for three years, supposing the war would last that long. He noted that his wife was a better manager than he, and that in any event he could not protect his family if he remained in Missouri. The farm was left in charge of Reuben and Suky, the faithful colored servants who had been there eight years. Suky was the slave he had purchased to save her from separation from her family. Marvin preached his last sermon in St. Louis on Sunday night, February 17, 1862, and drove west for the night. The next day he was at Fenton; he soon started south on horseback with no clothes except what he had on his back, and no papers of any kind. In the lining of his boot he carried a draft on a southern bank. The first day he reached Hillsboro. The town was full of soldiers and he feared arrest, but nothing happened. Within a few days he was safe within the Confederate lines. He went on to Memphis where he learned that the General Conference had been canceled. A friend there advised him to return to Missouri and thought he could safely do so. But Marvin decided to stay; he went on to Vicksburg, and thence to Woodville, Mississippi, where, due to the illness of the pastor, he became supply pastor of the Methodist Church until the Mississippi Conference met that December.

Marvin's ostensible reason for going south was to attend the General Conference of which he was a member. But contemporaries declared that nobody thought the General

Conference would meet, and they believed Marvin himself did not expect the session to be held. Yet he went. Why? Francis A. Morris who was pastor of First Church, St. Louis, at the time said later that he believed Marvin was called of God to leave St. Louis and go to wider and more perilous fields of labor and usefulness. My guess is that Marvin reasoned somewhat as follows. He was a Southern Methodist committed to the southern cause in the war. He was still of military age, only 38. As a minister he would not bear arms, but at the same time he desired to go where he as a clergyman could make as large a contribution as possible to the cause. He knew he could do nothing in St. Louis; indeed he would soon be in prison if he stayed there. In the South he might find some way as a minister to be of help. Also, zealous and prominent churchman that he was, he could hardly have been unmindful of the fact that if he survived the war, his contacts and his service in the South would open doors of opportunity for him in the years ahead.

Marvin's new friends in Woodville urged him to ask the Mississippi Conference to appoint him as their pastor when it met in Jackson in December, 1862. He declined, saying that if he stayed it would deprive some conference member of a good appointment. Meantime, he had been receiving letters urging him to come to General Sterling Price's army which was encamped at the time in Grenada, Mississippi. There were many Missourians under Price's command, some form Marvin's own church in St. Louis. Marvin responded to the call. It was the beginning of his army ministry. He stayed with Price's army until the surrender. However, he had no commission as an officer or as a chaplain, nor was he on the payroll of the army. He exercised purely voluntary spiritual functions, preaching often to the soldiers, and to the people round about when the soldiers were resting in camp. In 1863 someone in Richmond insisted that Marvin be officially commissioned as a chaplain, thus securing him military rank and pay. But if the commission ever reached him it was declined. Also, Bishop Paine, Superintendent of Methodist Chaplains, sent Marvin an ecclesiastical appointment as Superintendent of Methodist Chaplains in the Western Department of the Army. Such a title was in accord with Marvin's view of the proper relation of the ecclesiastical to the military, and he accepted it. The commission assigned
Marvin to General Richard Taylor's Corps in Western Louisiana. But he did not go, probably because of an extended period of eye trouble at the time which cost him the sight of one eye. During the war years, Marvin led in organizing an undenominational army church to minister to the soldiers and conserve the results of revivals. The project was unique in the armies of both sides.

Marvin was present at only one battle, the one at Helena, Arkansas. There he gave encouragement to the soldiers as they went forward. On the field of battle and in the temporary hospital in the rear, Marvin ministered to the wounded and the dying. Throughout the war he was respected and loved by all in camp.

Only about half of Marvin's time was spent in army labors proper. The other half was spent as a pastor or as an itinerant evangelist in the region in which Price's army maneuvered. The home of Rev W.E. Doty, Greenwood, Louisiana, was Marvin's headquarters for the last year and a half of the war; he had made Doty's acquaintance at the General Conference of 1850 in St. Louis.

In February 1865 the pastor at Marshall, Texas, died, and the people, knowing about Marvin, asked the presiding elder for Marvin as a supply, and he was appointed. About that time somebody applied to President Lincoln for a pass that would allow Mrs. Marvin and the children to join Marvin in the south. The permit was granted, and the family was reunited in March, 1865. Marvin served the Marshall church until August, 1866, some four months after he was elected bishop. However, he did not transfer his conference membership to Texas. If one asks why he did not return to Missouri as soon as the war was over, or when his own conference met in the fall of 1865, the best guess is that it was because of unsettled conditions and straitened finances. The Marshall church was referred to at the time as an "impoverished charge".

The General Conference of 1866 met in New Orleans and decided to elect four bishops. There was talk that at least one of the new bishops would be from west of the Mississippi. Marvin's name was prominently mentioned. He had become widely known during the war. The annual conference delegations from the west and the southwest supported him. However, the Missouri delegations were not unanimously for him. His friend Doty went to New Orleans and worked for his election. Marvin knew that he would receive some votes for bishop, but he tried to avoid giving the impression that he was seeking the office. He wanted to attend the conference, but since he was not a delegate and did not have to be in New Orleans, he timed his journey in that direction so as not to arrive until after the balloting for bishops was over. As it turned out, he was elected bishop on the first ballot on April 24, 1866 by a General Conference of which he was not a member, and at which he was not present, something rare in Methodism. At the time of his election, he was on a boat going down the Red River. While sitting on deck he had a sudden feeling or conviction that he had been elected bishop. Immediately he went to his stateroom and knelt in prayer asking forgiveness for having entertained such a

thought. Informed on arrival that he had really been elected bishop, Marvin looked agitated.

Bishop Paine reported later that he saw Marvin enter the church where the General Conference was in session and take a back seat. His attire was common and worn, his hair untrimmed, and his beard long. Paine called Doty to him and asked him to take Marvin to a barbershop and a clothing store and have him ready for ordination the next day. Told that the brethren did not like his full beard, Marvin replied that they had elected him with a beard and they would have to endure it. Bishop J.O. Andrew, who had ordained Marvin a deacon 23 years earlier, ordained him a bishop.

Marvin's labors in the episcopacy were prodigious and withal impressive. The office with its opportunities and demands gave scope to his creative administrative talents and enlarged his preaching ministry. The first conference over which he presided was the Indian Mission. He found it discouraged and ready to disband. Under his dynamic leadership the preachers were fired with new enthusiasm and went back to their circuits with renewed determination. He personally
Pledged $5,000 in quarterly installments for their support and then traveled through the church the next year and raised the money!

As a bishop Marvin was a man of enterprise. In1868, leaving his family in St. Louis, he went to the west coast and spent more than a year preaching, working, and encouraging the people. (*Editor's note; in those days, bishops were not assigned to a specific area, but were "general superintendents," over the whole church.)* Some thought the church should give up its work in that region, but Marvin would not hear to it. Almost single-handed he turned despair into confidence, retreat into advance. And to him ore than to any other man went the credit for rousing the whole church from the defeatism into which it had fallen as a result of the war. Marvin sought to tend the borders of Southern Methodism. Under his leadership the Illinois Conference was organized. He labored strenuously for the advance of Methodism in St. Louis. He personally raised much of the $100,000 needed to launch St. John's Church at 39th and Locust Streets in 1868. Like a modern director of research and information, he set forth statistics showing how the population of the city was increasing at a faster rate than the Methodist membership, and he noted how many new churches Methodism would have to establish if it was to keep pace with the growing metropolis. He delivered an inspiring address in 1872 at the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of First Church in St. Louis.

Marvin was a hard and incessant worker. He had a phrase, "Hard at work and happy in it." He wrote articles for the papers and even books in fragments of time, and by encroaching on the hours of sleep. He took only two brief vacations in his entire ministry, and he did some preaching during each period. D.R. McAnally, long-time editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate,* closed his biography of Marvin with this sentence, "He literally worked himself to death."

Marvin's method of sermonizing was unusual, and for the average preacher difficult if not impossible. He never wrote a line, never even made notes. Among his literary remains there was not a single scrap of paper containing even the skeleton of a sermon. He wrote the sermon in his head; he delivered it extemporaneously. One supposed he developed this method of making sermons while riding his first circuits. Long hours on horseback were more conducive to developing thoughts and writing them on the memory than on paper. Using such a method, a sermon with him grew, it was not made. In his early ministry, he could repeat a sermon at each preaching place on his circuit, and in time it was perfected and polished.

As Marvin grew older his method of sermonizing made for marked unevenness in the quality of his preaching. If he used an old sermon which had been delivered many times and from which the chaff had been winnowed, he could and did sweep the deck, as the saying goes. On the other hand, if he was using a new sermon which had not so to speak grown to maturity, he might be slow, hesitating, and somewhat inconsequential. It is said that in his later years he would try when attempting a sermon on a new text to relive the conscious apathy by citing memoriter brilliant passages from familiar sermons previously made and delivered many times. Marvin's career showed that the preacher whose memory is his only filing cabinet is at a disadvantage as he becomes busier and grows older. It is impossible for him to make a good new sermon for every occasion and equally impossible to keep in his memory all the first-rate sermons that he has made in the past.

In favor of Marvin's method of sermonizing it may be said that it made for considerable freedom and spontaneity of delivery. When he was dealing at his best with great themes, he was superb. Oftentimes his hearers could tell that new ideas were flying off his intellect like sparks. McAnally said that his best passages were created under the high inspiration of the stormful impulses of successful oratory, and that at such times he spoke as if divinely inspired and as if wrapped in a celestial halo. McAnally believed tha

if Marvin could have been accurately reported when at his best, the fame of his sermons would not have been surpassed in his day.

Though Marvin did not write sermons, except some 18 which were published, he did write articles and books. He began writing for the *Western Christian Advocate* while a young preacher and he kept on writing all his life. Finney speaks of his "voluminous use of the periodical press." His first book, "Lectures on Transubstantiation and Other Errors of the Papacy," was published in 1860. In 1867 he brought out "The Work of Christ," and in 1870 "The Life of William G. Caples," a book in which he told as much or more about himself than Caples. In 1876 he produced a volume of sermons which are more readable than most sermons printed nearly 100 years ago. Two of his books came out posthumously, "The Doctrinal Integrity of Methodism" and "To the East by Way of the West." The latter was perhaps his best and most interesting book. It sold 20,000 copies in six months. It was his travel letters written on his trip around the world, during which he visited the mission fields. His writing style, always good, was at its best in this book. He demonstrated remarkable powers of observation and description. Some passages are beautiful and inspired. The man's ability to do good writing under all circumstances, in snatches of time, and while near physical exhaustion was a tribute to his great drive, intelligence, and powers of concentration.

Many of Marvin's contemporaries said that he had what they called magnetism. It is true that men were attracted to him without his attempting any mastery over them. Apparently he sought no preeminence, yet it was conceded because of his subtle and inexplicable influence on people. C.F. Deems, who was himself a forceful personality, said that he first saw Marvin at the General Conference of 1850 in St. Louis and that he could not keep his eyes off him. Marvin was then only27. Marvin's power to attract others was especially noticeable when he was in the pulpit. Finney attempted to explain the man's influence on others as the result of his exalted character and his great career. He said Marvin was simply a good, true, and great man.

Marvin impressed many as a genuine saint in life and spirit. He was certainly a dedicated man. His family and his friends so regarded him. McAnally declared that if morality consists in fidelity to one's convictions of right, Marvin was a morally superior man. In some respects, his virtue bordered on asceticism. He was a total abstainer. His purity was unchallenged. He probed the depths of his soul to eradicate impure thoughts and unworthy motives. E.R. Hendrix, later bishop, who accompanied him on his trip around the world, was impressed by the man's habits of prayer and introspection. He said

Marvin was given to ejaculatory prayer especially at night. He would exclaim "Jesus, forgive me," or "My Savior, have mercy." Marvin fought against pride in his own success, remarking that he was a bag of vanity. Knowing his temptation, he resisted adulation on the part of others. At times, however, he did succumb to subtle flattery and attention. He was generous to a fault. On occasion he borrowed money to give it away. It was as though he sold all and gave to the poor. McAnally declared that in all his personal habits save one Marvin might have stood for a model of one of the old Puritans from whom he was descended.

In some ways Marvin's conscience was not sensitized. As already indicated, he failed to see that slavery was the sum of all villainy. For one who strove for the highest standards in personal conduct, and who believed in the necessity of self-denial, it seems strange that he indulged in tobacco. There are references to a pipe in his mouth when he was a boy preacher; he smoked freely all his mature life. Though he was on guard against anger and hatred in his own spirit and could overlook ill will or distrust toward him on the part of others, it was said that a little slight might upset him.

The General Conference of 1874 voted to have a bishop visit the Orient and ordain any native preachers recommended by the missionaries. The bishops gave Marvin the assignment. Accompanied by E.R. Hendrix, the bishop sailed from San Francisco in November, 1876, and returned to New York ten months later. Marvin looked on the tour as a means of dramatizing the missionary movement and inspiring the church to greater zeal for the cause. The journey, with the book that came from it, did just that. The outcome was a tribute to Marvin's vision and creative ability.

The world tour was Marvin's greatest appointment and it was his last. Although he was in some ways a human dynamo with seemingly inexhaustible energy, he was in truth physically frail, and the tides of life had begun to work out. There were one or tow premonitions of death, as recorded in his books. On Sunday, November 18, 1877, he preached at Centenary Church, St. Louis. It was a desultory effort, far from his best; some said his thoughts seemed uncoordinated. That night he had a chill, and two nights later another, along with severe pain. His doctor gave him morphine and ordered bed rest and no work. Paying little heed, he read proofs and talked to his publisher. He became much worse on November 25 and died in the early hours of the 26th of thrombosis. He had been scheduled to preach at Centenary Church on Thanksgiving Day, November 29. Instead his funeral was held there that day before a great throng, Bishop H.N.Mctyeire delivering the sermon. Burial was in Bellefontaine Cemetery. His grave is marked by a

dignified granite shaft some 20 feet in height, the money for it being raised by the Methodist preachers.

Summing up, we may say that without doubt E.M. Marvin had high intelligence. His mind was quick, keen, capacious and exceptionally retentive. He developed his native endowments in a marvelous way by assiduous discipline, observation, and study. His inner drive to excel at whatever he undertook must have been as a consuming fire. Reared in humble circumstances with few opportunities for education and refinement, he astounded his contemporaries by rising rapidly to become a star of the first magnitude in the Methodist itinerancy. He was a great preacher, inspiring the minds and stirring the hearts of his hearers. He loved the Methodist Church, its doctrines, and its itinerancy; he gave himself willingly and unreservedly to the church and its work; as he said, everything about Methodism not only satisfied him but also gratified him. He was free of jealousy and envy and seemed not to seek place or promotion; all he asked of the church was a place to work. Self-denial seemed inherent in his make-up; he felt that no sacrifice on behalf of the church was too great. He constantly practiced the presence of God, and his ambition was Christlikeness of life. After making due allowance for his native endowments which were great, one may say that his saintly character and his amazing achievements were the result of genuine consecration and indefatigable love. Enoch Mather Marvin was a dedicated genius.

Osage County Republican, September 9. 1920

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER

Reminiscences and sketches by E. Hopkins, a former Osagean, now resident of Tumwater, Washington.

Having closed our first year in the Ministry at Byron, we went to the Salem Circuit. On arriving at Salem we found a Circuit but no house to live in. On Mormon Creek, about 4 miles from Salem, lived one of my official members on a rented farm. The house was of brick, and was built by a slave owner, before the Civil War. One room was, if I remember correctly 24 by 24 feet and was used a ball room. We were offered this room as a parsonage, and into it we moved. The number of rooms that we could make out of this depended on how many curtains, sheets, etc., we had and as we had but few, the rooms were not numerous but of ample size. When I got my bearing, I found that I had inherited a Circuit which embraced Dent and Texas counties, part of Wright and a part of Phelps, a slice of Shannon and one appointment in Reynolds. In all this territory the Methodist Episcopal Church did not own a house of worship, and so far as I know, not a foot of land. When the weather would permit, we preached under the pine trees. When the weather was inclement, we preached in the people's cabins. There were but few school houses. As Salem was the head of the Circuit, I held first service there. It was a day long to be remembered. For one thing I had the "jumping" tooth ache. When I reached the building where the services were to be held, I found a man sitting outside who seemed restless. He informed me that immediately after the service, I was to go with him. There was a couple waiting to be married. "The oxen and the fatlings had been killed. Come for all things are now ready." When we arrived I found all things in readiness. After the ceremony we went to the table which was bountifully supplied. After dinner my friend astonished the company by presenting the groom with $100 as a wedding present. There were but few people who had that much loose money and as this man was a common laborer it attracted attention.

It proved to be one of those affairs when the coming off is better late than never, but would have been better had not been so late. It was necessary for someone to marry the girl, and as my friend already had a family, he was not eligible so he generously gave the groom $100 present, in order to get out of a very bad situation.

I divided the day between Salem and a place a few miles in the country. Saturday evening previous, I had called on a family out of town, and on my return, met a man who lived in the neighborhood where I was to preach the next day. He was intoxicated, or more properly, he was drunk. But he was not so drunk but what the next morning he remembered what had happened. He went over to one of his neighbors and said, "I saw your preacher yesterday but I guess he will not show up today." When asked if I was sick, he said, "Worse than sick, he was so drunk it took all the road to hold him". The day came to a close. I had preached my first sermon in Salem, had officiated my first wedding on my new circuit and sufficiently recovered from my ___ to fill my appointment in the country. I felt that I could face a whole lot, and I soon learned that I had a whole lot to face.

There were many contributing causes for the work of a Methodist preacher being difficult in the Ozarks at that time. It will be remembered that I am writing of conditions as they existed 50 years ago. Changes have taken place since. I think I am safe in saying that at the time of which I am writing, there was not a ferry boat on or a bridge across any stream in the bounds of my large Circuit. When at flood tide, these streams were raging torrents. At such times we waited until the water receded or plunged right in and took our chances. I seldom waited. Black Sam was a good swimmer and was always equal to the _____. He never disappointed me. Often we would ride for miles over trails. Wagon roads were not a necessity there being few wagons. Much of

the country was sparsely settled. I have ridden over long weary miles without seeing a cabin, or a human being. Tired and hungry, I have _____ stripped Black Sam of saddle and bridle and turned him _____ while I lay down upon the grass with my saddle bags for a pillow and the sky above me for a covering ____ slept the sleep of a weary man.

(To be continued next week.)

Osage County Republican, September 16, 1920

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER

Reminiscences and sketches by E. Hopkins, a former Osagean, now resident of Tumwater, Washington.

(Continued From Last Week)

Another element that contributed to the hardship was the hatred, and opposition of a gang of sneak thieves and cut throats. While the Civil War was in progress, they, not having the courage to go into the southern army, formed themselves into bands of bushwhackers and thieves. They were bitterly opposed to the Methodist Episcopal Church, and as it went without saying that every preacher in the church was a Union man, the battle was on. One of our preachers, a splendid fellow, was treated to a coat of tar and feathers. The only charge brought against him was that he belonged to the old North Church. It was also known that I had served in the Union Army, which was enough to draw the fine of these cowards.

At the head of one of their bands was a renegade preacher. I was holding a two days meeting at a place where I had never preached before. Spies were on my track, and when they had me located, reported to his band. The attack was to be made Sunday night. Runners were sent out and every loyal man and boy in the neighborhood came in. I was told to go on with the service. The women and children were brought into the cabin, the door securely fastened, and the men on each side of the road hid in the brush. The attack was made on schedule time, and was promptly met. The reply was so unexpected, and attended with so much punishment, that the mob, fearing that they would be cut off from their horses which they had left in the rear, ran. Years after when on a Circuit in Jasper county north of Carthage, I related this circumstance to a friend. He showed me the tree on which the renegade preacher was hanged, and the grave where his body was buried. I asked what was the crime for which he was executed. He replied, "He was the Captain of a band of horse thieves."

In order to reach the preaching places on this large Circuit, it was necessary to ride 150 miles each round which was made every few weeks, and preach nearly every day in the week. This, my second year as a Circuit rider, was drawing to a close. It had been a year of hard work, some privations, and adventure. But I had enjoyed it highly. I think I reported about 200 accessions to the church. I had received as salary, $175.000. Of these perhaps half was in money. Deer skins were worth fifty cents, coon skins from 15 to 25 cents. Opossum skins 5 cents. Home knit socks and suspenders were charged up to me on salary, at from ten to twenty cents a pair. These things I exchanged at the country store for groceries that was hauled by wagon and ox team from the nearest railroad station, distant 75 miles. I had weddings galore, but the revenue from this source did little toward piecing out salary.

Of some of these weddings, something will be said later.

E. Hopkins
Tumwater. Washington

"WHILE THE STORM CLOUDS GATHER...."

Shaw Avenue Methodist Church and its Methodist Youth Fellowship. 1939 – 1950

Richard J. Detweiler

As the 1930s era came to a close, people wondered if the "gathering clouds" of conflict would engulf us yet again. The vocalist Kate Smith became the nation's envoy of patriotism. Her recording of "God Bless America" took on hymn-like proportions for many people (a status the song still enjoys today.) At the same time there was another gathering in progress on the corner of Shaw Boulevard and Tower Grove Avenue (across from the Missouri Botanical Gardens) in St. Louis, Missouri. The MYF at Shaw Avenue Church was attracting what would become a unique group of teenagers in the war-time years. That uniqueness was enhanced as these youth made their way in the decades that followed.

Among other changes, St. Louis manufacturing was attracting people from the Ozarks, Arkansas, and Iowa, as production plants increased their demand for new employees. The family units brought kids from the small towns and Methodist churches across the Midwest. The church represented stability to these families uprooted from familiar surroundings by wartime necessity, and congregations felt the influx of fairly large numbers of new families. Shaw Avenue Church welcomed them with open arms, teenagers and all.

Pastors, then and now were the key to a thriving congregation. In the late 1930s, Dr. and Mrs. Burnell L. Schubel and their three good-looking daughters, set the stage for the youth program that was in the making. Dr. and Mrs. Sidney Stringham (he a great singer-song leader), and Harold Camp, connoisseur of old cars, plus his handsome son, Charles, served during these crucial years. These pastors were open and receptive to this mixed bag of youth on the church steps.

The youth attended one of the three large high schools in the near south side of St. Louis. Finding a place to "fit in" was a challenge in the big city. The folks at Shaw did it well. Laity who could and would work with the youth was part of the gift that created this group. John and Ida McGuire (he a coal miner), Miss Jessie Cable, a retired missionary, plus Willard and Nellie Burd (he a public service bus driver) were the principal youth leaders. They gave their time, money, transportation, plus enthusiasm, guidance, and love. What a combination for this assorted bunch of kids who were trying to sort out who they were and what they hoped to be! Further, numerous parents served as back-ups for our activities.

What kind of activities. For teens, then and now, how to get from one place to another is a big item, and cars were usually not an option for us. We relied on city buses and electric streetcars for transportation. And, the public service company, working with the schools, provided a 24/7 pass at a cost of 50 cents a week!! It was a ready-made bargain for ready to travel teenagers!

The church had a public theme – "Sunday Evening at Shaw." There was Sunday School and worship in the morning, but go again at night? What teenager would be caught in church on a Sunday night? Not many, but at Shaw Avenue they came by the dozens. In contrast to high school, the group relationships provided an identity hard to establish in a large school. Moreover, the church gave them involvement: the youth choir, handing out hymnbooks, ushering chores, and lining up for prayer time at the communion rail. It was unique, different, unlike anything most of us had ever experienced. In some way, God made his presence known. It was such a special time! And this occurred after the 6 pm MYF meeting.

When church was over, we often walked six blocks to an Italian restaurant on the Hill. "Chili Mac" was the meal of choice, and Salas was the 1st dining out experience of many of us. How much? Twenty-five cents.

Some events were church-oriented, such as visiting the Methodist orphanage, taking the orphaned children downtown during the Christmas season, caroling on Christmas Eve, and the candlelight service at 9 pm for us. These events provided electrifying memories of Shaw Avenue. Non-church events were integrated into our go-go agenda, and for all practical purposes became church events.

In Forest Park it was Art Hill for sledding in the winter (we took sleds on the streetcar), Forest Park Highlands (an early theme park) for swimming, the Municipal Opera because they offered free seats, and if things were really rolling, the A & W on South Kingshighway. The identity of the group held no matter where we went. It was our "coming out" experienced, and if we could not go someplace, those wonderful counselors opened their 2nd floor, four-room apartments, fed us, and we could do what we couldn't do at church – dance! And dance we did. The "storm clouds gathered," Kate Smith sang "God Bless America" a million times, and through all this we discovered some meaning of a commitment to Jesus Christ. For many of us the "church thing" was new in our families. God was finding his way into our lives.

There were two gathering experiences beyond the local church that gave us a window to a wider world. The St. Louis District MYF met monthly at one of the churches. Attendance was taken and the largest group carried the district banner "home" for a month. Shaw Avenue took the competition seriously, often rallying the troops to 20 or 25 kids, claiming victory many times

over. A second gathering experience was summer camp at Epworth-Among-the-Hills, Arcadia, Missouri. For myself, moving from Boy Scout camp to church camp was a tough decision. My parents said, "One or the other, but not both. You have to work." It was a painful choice, but I headed for Epworth.

We could catch the train at Tower Grove Station, six blocks from the church, and a three hour ride landed us in Arcadia. We took a crowd there, too. It was another step on the ladder. We looked at a big world out there. Devil's Ice Box, Pilot Knob at sunset, the water tower, and campfire were memorable events. Pastors like Marvin Fortel, Ralph Hicks, Uncle Billy Meyer, and Herman Lehwald gave primary leadership. Little did I know that one day these persons would be my mentors. The enrichment of the Spirit, as we discovered more and more about the meaning of a commitment to Jesus Christ, transformed our lives forever.

In subsequent years, three of our group were called to fulltime ministry in the church: Charles Giesler, of San Antonio, Texas, Ivan Lee LaTurno, and myself. And what of young women who believed that they, too, had a call for ministry? They most frequently served in the mission field, ad we had Elsie (Kelly) Pettibone, who took her family to Nepal for twenty-five years, and then to other places as well. Dickson Miner came out of the Ozarks, and set his course as a medical missionary to the Congo, but lost his life in an auto accident after securing his degree. Robert Wishon, following a stint in the business world, turned to the Christian Business Men's Association, and for 19 years directed that ministry in New Jersey and Manhattan Island. Above and beyond these persons were the dozens, who with their families spread out across the nation, accepting church leadership roles wherever they called home.

In 1995 a group of us decided we should try for a reunion, and where else but Shaw Avenue Church? A prodigious task, but several delivered memories, telephone numbers, emails, plus word of mouth, and 57 families came together for a long weekend in the old neighborhood. The event was a great time of sharing photos, memorabilia, and telling stories. On Sunday morning we filled the sanctuary and sang again some of those gospel hymns we had heard there for the first time, fifty years before. The power of God's Spirit was truly upon us again. No one will ever forget the occasion, nor want to.

"What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us?" As I read, hear, and reflect on the stories of life-long friends, it is clear they were not spared "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune". The greater truth is, by their early discovery of God's presence in life, they have been able to take the storm clouds as they appeared, and live by faith. Remember the hymn?...

Mortals, join the mighty chorus which the morning stars began

Love divine is reigning o'er us, binding all within its span.
Ever singing, march we onward, victors in the midst of strife;
Joyful music leads us sunward, in the triumph song of life.

Central Methodist University Honors Reverend Marjorie Casson

On February 9, 2005 Central Methodist University honored the Reverend Marjorie Casson of Brunswick, Missouri. She was given the university's Heritage Award as part of the celebration of Black History Month. The Reverend Casson entered Central (then Central College) in the summer of 1953, becoming the first African-American to matriculate at Central. She attended part- and full-time until she earned her B.S.Ed. degree in August of 1959. She was the first black woman to be granted a degree from Central.

Casson was a teacher and preacher before she entered Central at the age of 44. She had already studied at Western University in Kansas City, KS, and at Lincoln University in Jefferson City. She was a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) church and was a preacher in that denomination. Her last year at Central, she moved to Fayette and studied full-time, supporting herself by cleaning and cooking for a Fayette family.

Marjorie Casson recently reached the age of 96. During her life, she has been a principal, nurse, janitor, cook, laundress, undertaker's assistant, and lawyer's assistant. She has also been in ministry for over 60 years, building and remodeling churches, supporting and preaching to congregations.

James P. Thogmorton, who was Dean of Students at Central while Marjorie Casson was a student, said

> When Marjorie Casson came to Central College in 1953, nothing had been reserved for her. She had no inherent rights or privileges that assured her an education at Central. The Supreme Court decision of "Brown vs. Board of Education which repealed the concept of "separate but equal" had not yet been made. It would be another eleven years before Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech....No African-American student had ever been granted admission to Central. At the age of 44, Marjorie Casson came to Central to pursue a degree. She had been teaching and preaching for a number of years already. She did not have to return to school. She did not have to choose an all-white college. Yet, she did. And in so doing, she began a rich heritage that would encourage black students to attend Central and fulfill their potential. Even while in school, Rev. Casson was teaching and preaching. During the time she was in Fayette, she supported herself by cooking and cleaning for a local family. When she finished her work in the evening, she would study. By attending classes

summers, nights, and occasionally fall and spring semesters, she finally graduated in 1959, six years after her entrance.

Because Marjorie Casson broke the color barrier at Central College, the road became easier for young blacks to obtain an education. In 1954 Fielding Draffen entered Central and became Central's first African-American graduate in 1957. He went on to become the first black air-traffic controller in the tower at Kansas City's Downtown Airport....And in 1957 Central accepted Abel Muzorewa, an African who went on to become Zimbabwe's first black Methodist bishop – and its first black prime minister.

This article is taken from materials supplied by Central Methodist University.

AND ARE WE YET ALIVE?
SINGING OUR HISTORY

John O. Gooch

Every year, we do the same old thing at the beginning of annual conference. We sing, "And Are We Yet Alive?' (UMH #553) We're not sure why we do that, even though we may sometimes hear the bishop say that this hymn has been sung to open every Methodist annual conference since Charles Wesley wrote it, back in 1749. It's a part of our history that we've forgotten.

When Charles wrote that hymn, there was genuine amazement when the conference gathered each year. Methodist preachers were often stoned, thrown into ponds, jailed, tarred, and threatened by mobs. They rode thousands of miles on horseback in all kinds of weather, slept poorly, ate worse, and were exposed to all kinds of illness – without benefit of antibiotics. No wonder when they gathered, they sang, "and are we yet alive?"

Now let's change the scene to Missouri in the 19th century. Joseph Oglesby had just reported to the Western Conference that there were 200 prospects of Methodist work in Missouri – out of 200 English -- speaking persons! Oglesby was on the Illinois Circuit that year, but Bishop Asbury had sent him on a fact-finding expedition. He went up the Missouri as far as the Femme Osage, in modern-day St. Charles County (where he talked with Daniel Boone, who never became a Methodist, but his children apparently did). Then he cut across country to the home of Sarah Barton Murphy, near present-day Farmington. After struggling through the Missouri wilderness, how do you suppose he felt when the conference sang "and are we yet alive?"

The circuit riders didn't have an easy time of it. One of them describes spending the night in the lonely cabin of a settler. The woman of the house made corn bread in the iron skillet. Then she fried the meat in the same skillet. Finally, still using the same skillet, and without benefit of soap and water, she made the coffee! Another circuit rider visited a home, but slept outdoors, preferring to face the elements rather than the fleas inside. "And are we yet alive?" indeed.

One wonders about the Palmyra Conference of 1865. The war was over, and the M.E. Church, South, in Missouri was devastated. Andrew Monroe, the patriarch of the Missouri Conference, gathered together as many of the preachers as he could reach, hoping to decide if southern Methodism had a future. Now, in fact, there was great pessimism all over the old Confederacy about the future of the church. The victorious Northerners were making the argument that, since the war was over and the South was defeated, there was no longer any reason

for the southern church to be a separate body. Rather they should just come back into the fold, one church at a time. Many discouraged southerners considered doing just that. When the little band of Missouri preachers met in Palmyra, they came from regions of the state that had been devastated by the war. They came from prisons where they had been put, simply because they belonged to the M.E. Church, South, which was considered cause enough for a charge of treason. They had been beaten, their property taken from them, they had seen many of their brothers murdered, their families left homeless, because of the war. I wonder if they sang "And are we yet alive?" Each preacher there answered the roll by telling how things were in his charge, and as much as he knew about charges around him whose pastors had been killed, driven off, or were otherwise unable to come. Out of that conference came what was known as the Palmyra Manifesto, a document that stirred the Southern Church into action, led the bishops to call a General Conference for 1866, and generally led to a rebirth of the M.E. Church, South. All over the South, Methodists said that, if the Methodists in Missouri, after all they had suffered, could rally around the church and call for its renewal, they could do no less. "And are we yet alive?"

Enoch Mather Marvin had, during the war, made provision for his family and then fled through the Union lines to the deep south. He had been an evangelist in Louisiana, an army chaplain with General Price's troops in Texas, and a pastor in Texas. In 1866, he was on a steamboat bound for New Orleans where the General Conference of the M.E. Church, South was gathered. On the boat, he was struck by a premonition that he would be elected bishop – by a General Conference where he was not present, and of which he was not a member! Before the conference started on business, however, they sang, with awe and wonder, "And are we yet alive?"

Let's look at that hymn for a minute – and then we'll look at another Wesley hymn that tells us so much about our history and our faith. "And are we yet alive?" is about more than wonder that we've survived yet another year. It's also an exposition of Methodist doctrine. Scott Jones, of Perkins School of Theology (at the time the article was written – he is now the bishop of Kansas) argues there are three core doctrines of Methodism – sin, salvation, and sanctification. He has since enlarged that understanding, but that's a good place to begin. There is not much about sin in this hymn, but salvation and sanctification are certainly there. First, there is prevenient grace, which, I remind you, means that grace of God that comes to us and calls us before we are even aware of God, or of our need for God. We have been "preserved by power divine." "The Lord has out of all…has brought us by his love." Then, there is salvation. It is Christ's redeeming power of which we boast. More: that redeeming power "saves us to the uttermost, till we can sin no more." That's sanctification. Sanctification does not mean being

made perfectly sinless. It means being saved "wholly," becoming all that God intended us to become. And it is the gift of God's grace. This is why we boast, not because of our own efforts, but because of Christ's redeeming power. Finally, there is a call to commitment. "Let us take up the cross till we the crown obtain, and gladly reckon all things loss, so we may Jesus gain."

Now let's look at a second hymn, perhaps the greatest hymn Charles Wesley ever wrote. He called it "Wrestling Jacob," for the Old Testament story of Jacob wrestling with the angel of which it was based. We know it is "Come, O Thou Traveler Unknown" (#386 UMH). You can see, at #387, that in the original there were at least 14 verses. Charles wrote a lot, particularly considering that he used a quill pen instead of a word processor. What does the hymn say to us about our history? First, it says something about Jacob's struggle with God. Then it recapitulates the faith struggles of John and Charles Wesley. The great crisis in their faith was their conception of the nature of God, of God's grace, and of how God works for salvation in human life. In the Holy Club thy tried to save themselves by preaching to others. But it was not until May of 1738 that they came to feel in their hearts that God was, indeed, love, and freely gave salvation because of that great love. This hymn is also about our own struggles with the nature of God. Do we believe that God is love? Or do we believe that God is some kind of stern watcher, who marks down all we do wrong, and who wants to grovel in penitence and shame before we can be saved? Remember Jonathan Edwards' great sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" that you had to read in American Lit classes in high school? Edwards uses the image of a loathsome spider, dangling by a single strand of silk, over a raging fire. God, he said, would like to make a swing of God's hand lat the strand of silk, and break it off, sending the spider falling into the flames. If you were being described as a spider, at whom God was angry, how would you feel about your relationship with God? In the 19th and early 20th centuries, American Methodism joined much of the rest of the nation in revival movements that emphasized the sinfulness of human nature, the wrath of God, and the call for repentance. (Early Methodist circuit riders had also called for repentance, but they called for it out of the loving nature of God.) Against that, contrast Wesley's words.

Notice the importance of three key elements of Wesleyan thought in this hymn. The hymn practically begins with sin. "I need not tell thee who I am, my misery and sin declare." That is, my very nature, my name, is sin. Sin is something we don't like to talk about in these early years of the 21st century. We like to think of sin as an out-moded concept, something that psychology can explain away. It's really the way we were raised, or toilet-trained, or the fault of the society in which we grew up. But, as one of my seminary professors used to say, what

happens if we get behind all the layers of guilt that society has imposed on us – and we discover that we are really guilty? One of the problems we had in the Baptism Study Committee was what to say about the reality of sin, and its relationship to baptism. Ultimately, we "punted" on that question – though some of us on the committee who were termed "liberal" were willing to go a lot farther in emphasizing sin/salvation than was the committee as a whole.

The Wesleys were very much aware of the reality of sin. On the morning of May 24, 1738, which you will recognize as a fateful date, John was in despair over his own sin(which for him really meant not having a relationship with God). He went to St. Paul's Cathedral and heard the choir singing the *De Profundis,* "out of the depths I cry to thee, o Lord, hear my voice. If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, Lord, who could stand?" He knew that described his condition. When he went to the meeting in Aldersgate Street that night, he was still burdened with a sense of sin. And do you remember what he said about his heart-warming experience? "An assurance was given me that Christ had taken away my sin, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

Now, let's go back to the hymn. In the 14 verses printed at #387 in The United Methodist Hymnal, 9 are about the struggle. Tell me thy name…I will not let thee go, till I thy name, thy nature know. Verse 9 is a kind of transition, where the hymn asks, "tell me if thy name is Love." Then the last 5 verses all end with the same words: "thy nature and thy name is Love."

One of the great messages our world is waiting to hear is found in these verses. God is a God of love and forgiveness. Andrew Greeley, the priest/sociologist/best-selling novelists, has written more novels than is good for him. The plots are pretty much predictable. But I read them for the theology as much as for the plot, though Bishop Blackie Ryan is an awfully good detective. What is the theology? Basically, it can be boiled down to one sentence which more and more is explicit in the novels, rather than implicit: "God loves you with a passion that you cannot even begin to imagine."

That is the heart of the Wesleyan message as well. It's the core of our history. It can become the core of our own lives, of our faith walk with God. It could become the fire that starts a new revival in America, here in the early days of the new millennium. "God loves you with a passion you cannot even begin to imagine." "Tis love! 'Tis love! Thou diedst for me, I hear thy whisper in my heart. The morning breaks, the shadows flee, pure Universal Love thou art. To me, to all, they mercies move; thy nature and thy name is Love."